

Government Orders

at that time, the situation would have been rectified; but it has been let go on and on, and of course the bill has escalated. At Graham's Pond, we have the same situation. At that wharf the bill has now escalated to \$1 million or \$1 million plus. It is time that the government put some funding into wharf repair in Atlantic Canada.

When I was elected in 1988, I made it a priority to help fishermen get work done on their wharfs. I have to admit that we had very little success. As I said, a job which at that time would have been worth about \$25,000 has now escalated to \$300,000. If fishermen are to prosper in Prince Edward Island and in the rest of the country, we simply have to put more money into wharfs.

Something else which this bill does not address is the entire question of enforcement. True, there are clauses dealing with the power of the fisheries officers, but there is nothing dealing with the question of staffing. During the committee hearings on the bill there was almost total agreement among the witnesses that DFO was not adequately staffed.

One witness, Mr. Jim Rushton of United Fishermen and Allied Workers, said:

There has been a consistent cutback over the last 10 years in the percentage of the budget for enforcement. That needs to be strengthened. A fine will not deter someone who believes they will not be caught.

It is obvious to all that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is understaffed. There are fisheries officers working 20 hours a day. One witness told us of an area where there were two fisheries officers taking care of seven wharfs. I am sure that is the problem in many areas. There is just not enough staff to take care of doing the job properly.

If that were not bad enough, DFO is now faced with more budget cuts as a result of the government's poor fiscal management. A sum over \$11 million has now been cut from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Capital expenditures, travel costs and, more important, overtime may be cut back. Fisheries officers have a difficult enough time doing their jobs without more restraint. Fisheries officers truly know how important their jobs are but, if they cannot be paid, they cannot do their job.

Witnesses told the committee that problems also exist in our judicial system. Simply put, judges and Crown prosecutors do not place enough emphasis on crimes that occur off our shores. Many judges do not view fisheries violations as being crimes, but to me no other word fits.

What do we call it when a logging company drives a CAT tractor through the headwater of a river where salmon are spawning, destroying a rich and valuable resource? What do we call it when an outlawed fisherman catches 100,000 pounds over his quota, or when a boat captain assaults a fisheries officer who boards his vessel?

• (1630)

Still others believe that Fisheries Act offences are victimless. What happens when a fisherman from Georgetown, Prince Edward Island has his quota cut simply because somebody else has overfished? In this situation, the fisherman from Georgetown is paying the penalty for the crime.

Also, in this situation there is less fish. The fish plant workers are cut back and, it is a direct slam on the economy of eastern Prince Edward Island.

Some witnesses questioned why there was not a whistle blower provision in the bill that would protect those people who report violations of the act. This would be especially true for employees of companies that break the law. Some protection should be given to these people. Even fishermen need protection when they report and testify against their fellow fishermen who have overfished or used undersized mesh. One witness, Mr. Evan Walters of the Scotia-Fundy Seashore Fishermen's Association suggested:

Something that might do well is the Crime Stoppers system. We have been advocating this for two or three years now. We like this system of some financial reward. There is nothing like money to move the wheels of justice.

Mr. Walters pointed out a number of cases that he knew about where fishermen had sugar poured into their gas tanks or had their tires slashed. He told of one situation where a fisherman had his boat set on fire. These people need protection, and there is nothing in this bill to provide it.

During the committee hearings there was much talk about minimum fines and the like. A number of witnesses from the west coast suggested that they had no